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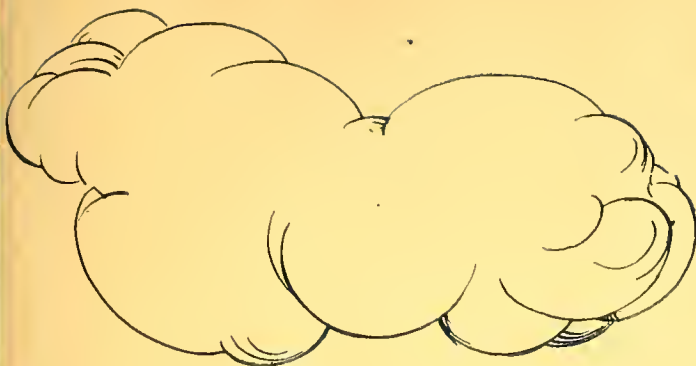


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Zodiac town



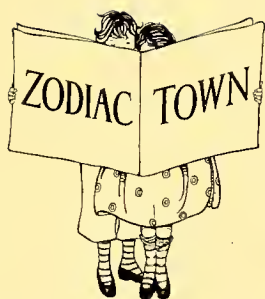


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*Amos and Ann  
And the Journeying Man*



# ZODIAC TOWN

## *The Rhymes of Amos and Ann*

By NANCY BYRD TURNER

*Illustrated by* WINIFRED BROMHALL



THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS  
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*To My Father*





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## ZODIAC TOWN

AMOS and Ann had a poem to learn,  
A poem to learn one day ;  
But alas ! they sighed, and alack ! they cried,  
'T were better to go and play.  
Ann was sure 't was a waste of time  
To bother a child with jingling rhyme.  
Amos said, " What 's the sense in rhythm —  
Feet and lines ? " He had finished with 'em !

They peered at the poem with scowly faces,  
And yawned and stumbled and lost their places.  
Then — a breeze romped by, and a bluebird sang,  
And they shut the book with a snap and a bang ;  
Shut the book and were off and away,  
Away on flying feet ; —  
Never did squirrels move more light,  
Or rabbits run more fleet !

Over a wall and down a lane  
And through a field they ran ;  
And " Where shall we go ? " said Amos. " Oh,  
And where shall we stop ? " cried Ann.  
Then all at once, round the curve of a hill,  
They pulled up panting and stood stock-still ;

For there, by the edge of a rippletly brook,  
In a deep little, steep little place,  
Sat a long-legged youth, with a staff and a book  
And a quaint, very quizzical face.  
His cap and his trousers were dusty green  
And his jacket was rusty brown,  
And he whittled away on sweet white wood,  
With shavings showering down.  
He whittled away 'twixt a laugh and a tune,  
With fingers as light as thistles.

"And what are you making?" asked Amos and Ann.

He said, "I am making whistles."  
He finished one with a notch and a slit,  
And threw back his head and blew on it.

The whistle sang like a bird when he blew,  
Then he twinkled and put it down.  
"And where are you going," he said, "you two?  
*Are you going to Zodiac Town?*"

Each of them shook a doubtful head  
(For truly they did n't know).

"But make us a whistle like yours," they said,  
"And anywhere we will go!"

"I'll make you a whistle-apiece," quoth he,  
"And if you like, you may follow me;  
Zodiac Town's in the land of Time,  
And I go by the road of Rhyme."

Ann looked at Amos and Amos at Ann;  
They blinked with sheer surprise;  
And then they looked at the long-legged man,  
Who twinkled back with his eyes.  
They said (and their voices were meek and low),  
"We ran away from a rhyme, you know."

"You did?" cried the fellow in green and brown.  
"Then it's unmistakably plain, oho,  
That you're due in Zodiac Town!"

He took up his book and shouldered his staff,  
And turned to Amos and Ann.  
"Call me J. M.," he said with a laugh.  
"That stands for Journeying Man.  
I'll make you some whistles along the way,  
While you are remembering rhymes to say;  
For more than once in the land of Time  
You will have to speak in rhyme."

"Our names," said the children, "are Amos and Ann;  
And poetry is rather hard for us,  
But we'll do the best we can."

Then they went away with the young-faced man,  
Joyfully up and down,  
Talking in rhyme by hill and lea,  
Gayly in rhyme — for that, said he,  
Was the tongue of Zodiac Town.  
To Zodiac after a while they came —  
The twistiest, mistiest town,  
With odd little collopy, scallopy streets  
Meandering up and down.  
The home of the years and the hours was there,  
Of the minutes, the months, and the days —  
Houses with windows that winked and smiled,  
And doors with sociable ways;  
And leaves and apples and chestnuts brown  
Came pattering down, came clattering down,  
And stairways wound to the top of a hill  
That a person could climb if he had the will —  
That a person could climb, then start at the top,  
And bumpeting down and thumpeting down,  
Go zip! to the bottom with never a stop.

“*Whoopee!*” cried Amos — and off and away,  
Quick with a kick, like a clown,  
He ran to the top of the highest stair,  
Ann at his heels — And zip! the pair  
Came bumpeting down and thumpeting down.

Then, “Come, you two,” said the Journeying Man,

“ We have twelve calls to pay.  
We ’ll visit the months this time, if we can.  
Now listen to me : at every house  
Many clocks will be ticking away :  
Grandfather clocks and cuckoo clocks  
And moon-faced clocks on shelves,  
Clocks with alarms and eight-day clocks,  
All talking low to themselves ;  
Little gilt clocks and clocks with chimes,  
And all of them keeping different times.  
And any minute of any hour  
(You never did see their like),  
Evening or morning, with never a warning,  
One of the lot will strike.  
And you *may* be talking your everyday talk,  
But the instant the hour shall chime,  
Quick as a flash you must stop, and dash  
Right into a rollicking rhyme ! ”

“ What kind of a rhyme ? ” gasped Amos and Ann.  
“ What kind of a rhyme, J. M. ? ”

“ Any kind at all,” said the Journeying Man,  
As he twinkled his eyes at them.  
“ But it must begin with the very two sounds,  
(Or three or four, if you like,) .  
*The last few sounds that were on your tongue  
When the clock began to strike ! ”*





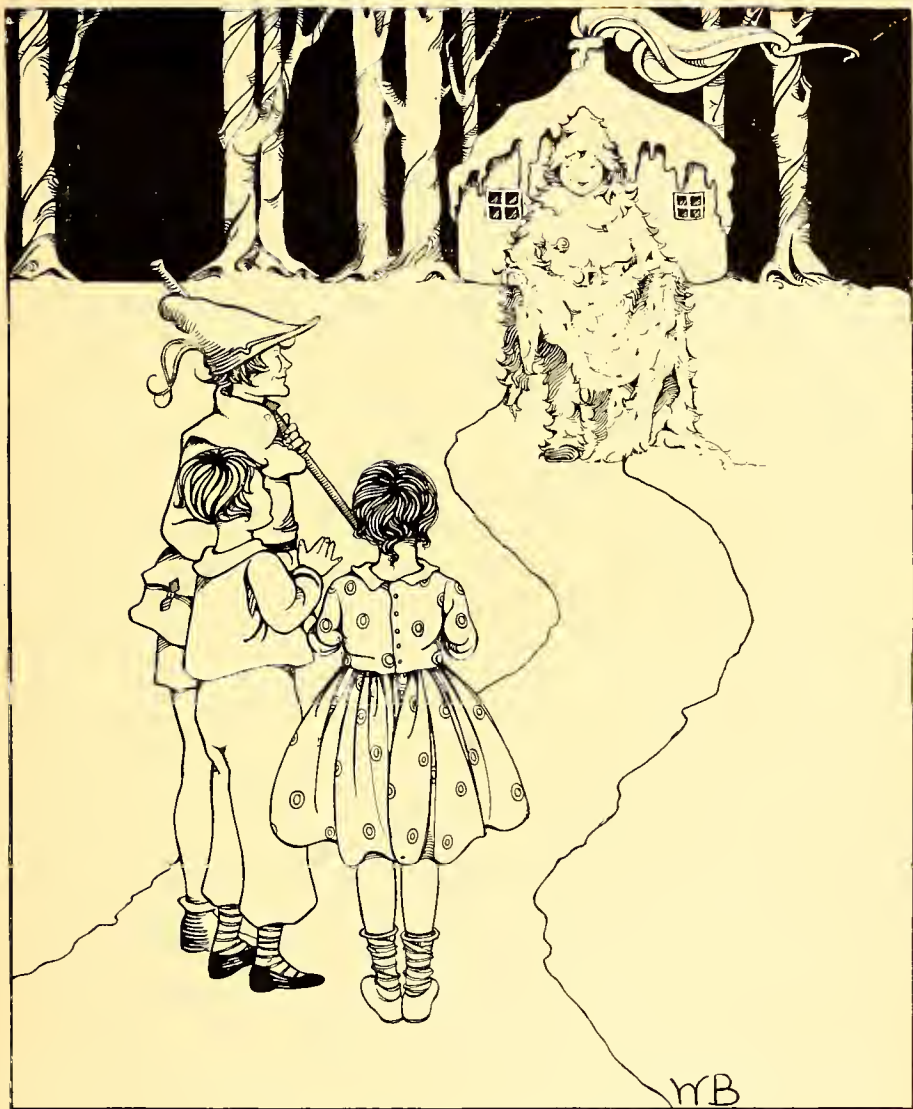
JANUARY

I  
JANUARY



*Aquarius*

*They went to the January house,  
A house made all of snow,  
With windows of ice, and chandeliers  
Of icicles all in a row.  
The trim young master was dressed in fur  
And did n't seem cold at all —  
A red-cheeked, rollicking, frolicking chap,  
Who offered each caller an ermine wrap,  
And let them skate in his hall.*



*They went to the January house*



WHILE they were skating round the hall, Amos's feet flew from under him and he sat down hard on the ice.

"Did you break anything?" asked the January boy. "I hope not, indeed," he added earnestly, "because so many things are broken here."

"What kind of things?" Amos wanted to know.

"Mainly resolutions," answered January with a wry face. And then he further said: "So many of *them* get broken that sometimes I think I'll move into another house."

"But then," put in little Ann, "we shouldn't have any New Year. And oh, how we'd miss New Year—"

A square-faced clock on the hall-landing struck one just as Ann said she'd miss New Year.

"Oh!" said Ann with a gasp. "Now I've got to say a rhyme beginning — 'miss New Year.' What shall I say?"

"Miss New Year, miss New Year—" Then all at once, to her intense surprise, she found herself reciting:

“Miss New Year dressed herself in white,  
With crystal buttons shining,  
A spangled scarf, all lacy-light  
About her shoulders twining;  
A bunch of pearly mistletoe,  
A twig of ruddy holly,  
She tucked among her curls, and oh,  
She was so sweet and jolly!

“She tapped upon my window-pane  
And waked me, bright and early.  
'Come, come,' she cried, 'the sun's outside,  
The winds are gay and whirly!  
'Neath winter frost and summer sky,  
In spring or autumn weather,  
Come out, dear child, and you and I  
Will be good chums together!'"

J. M. was the next one to get caught. January had just asked the three to stay to lunch.

“Wish we could,” said the Journeying Man, “but in spite of all these clocks there is no time. I can smell your stew cooking, January—, such stew!”

A clock struck eight just as the Journeying Man said “such stew.” Without hesitation he went on:—

“ ‘Such stupid days!’ said Willie Green  
With long and doleful face.  
‘Suppose to-night the whirling globe  
Should drop us into space :  
Hooray ! I’d ride the moon astride,  
And, if a cloud sailed up,  
Pretend it was a feather-bed,  
And dive right in, kerplup !’

“ ‘What if the moon went in eclipse?’  
Said little Johnny Brown ;  
‘Or if the clouds turned into rain  
And sent you drizzling down?  
Or if a thunder-bolt went off  
And knocked you rather flat?’

“ ‘Now that’s the truth,’ said Willie Green,  
‘I had n’t thought of that!’

“ ‘But, ‘Earth’s so poky,’ still he mused ;  
‘It must be finer far  
To play *I Spy* across the sky,  
And skip from star to star.’

“ ‘Stars fall, sometimes,’ quoth Johnny Brown,  
‘To where, nobody knows.’

“ ‘Oh, dearie me!’ cried Willie Green,  
‘I only said *Suppose!*’”



Amos had a question to ask as the travelers turned to leave the January house.

“Don’t you keep any pets?” he said.

January grinned. “It would have to be a cold kind of pet,” he replied. “And I don’t like seals and walruses. The very animal that I want I can’t have: the alligator has always been my favorite.”

“The alligator?” echoed Amos and Ann.

“Yes,” said January, firmly. “Always the al —”

But a little nickel clock caught him just there, so he remarked instead: —

“Always the alphabet to me  
Is like a happy family.  
They work in groups, they work in pairs,  
But each one has his little airs:  
R runs and romps, and so does S,  
And Z is full of foolishness;  
H always smiles, and A is jolly;  
G’s somehow sort of melancholy.  
Q sticks his tongue into his cheek  
And always waits for U to speak;  
D’s fat and lazy; so is C;  
And O makes funny mouths at me.

Among the pleasant alphabet  
It's hard to pick and choose — and yet,  
When all is said, I can't deny  
(You'll understand), my choice is I!"



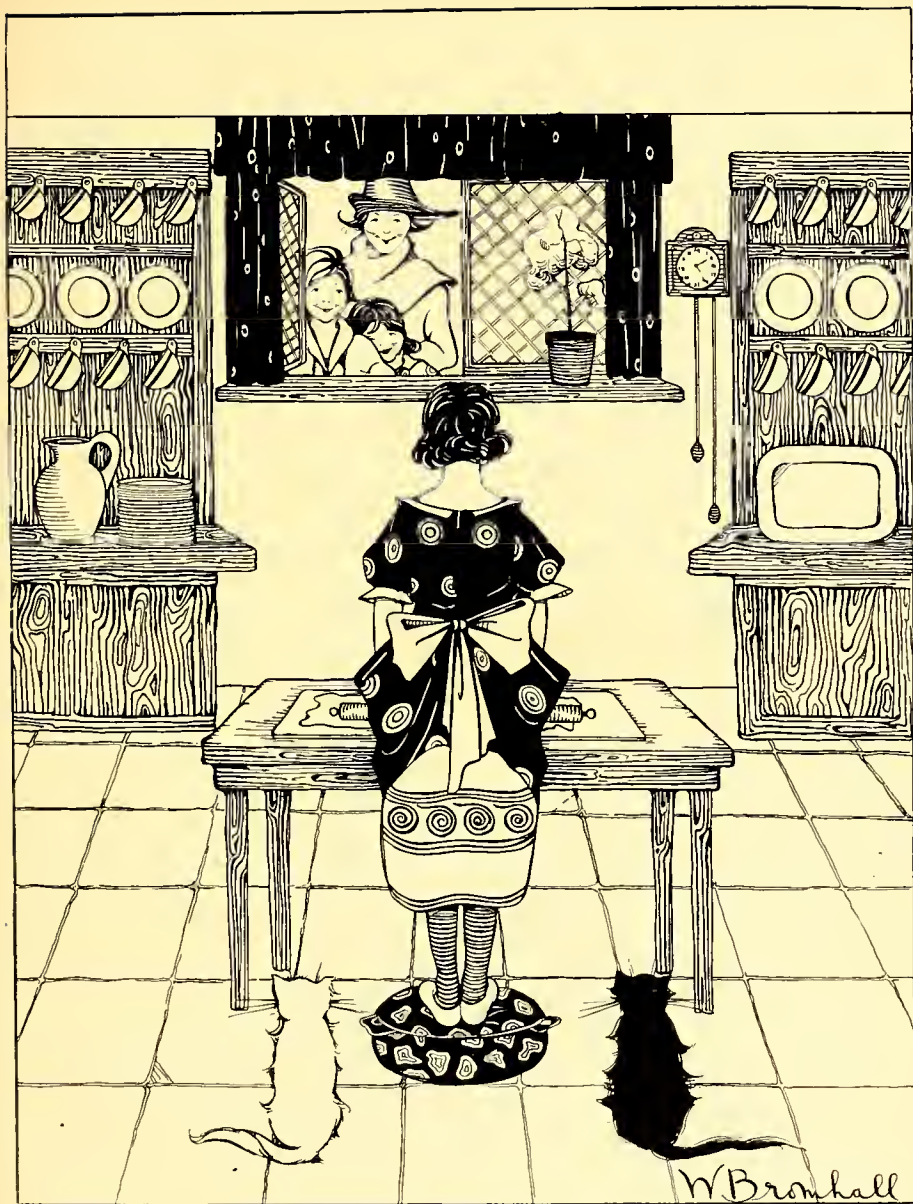
FEbruary

## II FEBRUARY



*Pisces*

*They went to the February place:  
'T was fashioned, with curious art,  
Of colored sugar and paper lace,  
With a front door shaped like a heart.  
A trim little, slim little maid within  
Was rolling out cookies crisp and thin;  
She blew them a kiss through the window wide,  
And bade them step inside.*



*They went to the February place*





THE little valentine girl in the February house was very sociable; but she talked so much, and there were so many clocks striking all around, that she was always getting side-tracked into a rhyme.

For example, she was just about to describe a jolly party she went to one day last year, when a clock struck six, and she was obliged to say, instead:—

“One day last year, with hems and haws and sidelong steps and nervous caws, the crows came mincing forth to mail gay valentines, you know. The post box was a hollow tree. They did not know, unluckily, that squirrels had gnawed the floor away, and owls moved in below.

“The crows went flapping off with glee. They said, ‘Our woodland friends will see that, though we dress so solemnly, we’re sociable at heart.’

“The valentines came hurrying down, came scurrying down, came flurrying down, and waked the owls, all fast asleep, and gave them quite a start.

“‘What’s this, my dear, amiss, my dear?’ cried Father Owl.

“‘Oh, bliss, my dear,’ said Mrs. Owl. ‘A shower of mail for us. How very fine!’

“The daughter owls were full of joy, and quick the little owlet boy ruffed up his feathers roguishly and seized a valentine.

“Excitement reigned among those owls; but, being such nocturnal fowls, they could not read the valentines at all in broad

daylight. They blinked a bit and winked a bit, but found them not distinct a bit ; then did not go to bed again, but waited for the night.

“Just after dusk a thing occurred, unfortunate for every bird : a wild, wild wind came romping in (it was a dreadful prank), and with a swoop, in boisterous play, swept all the envelopes away.

“The poor owls cried, ‘Alackaday, we shan’t know whom to thank!’

“Next morning all the crows came out and pranced about and glanced about, expecting greetings from their friends, and praise, and everything ; but when they got no single word of gratitude from any bird, they held a meeting in the trees that made the whole woods ring.

“Oh, well, it surely seemed a shame, but no one really was to blame ; and this year all the birds around (I heard it from a wren) will put their mail most carefully safe in a holeproof hollow tree. And every crow is going to be a happy crow again !”

Little Ann was enchanted with the February house ; she planned in her own mind to copy it in chocolate and taffy.

“I’d like to see upstairs, — the beds and bureaus and things, —” she said shyly, “if you don’t mind my looking —”

A big clock began to boom somewhere near.

“My looking —” repeated Ann. “Dear me suz, I’m caught again! What shall I say?”

Then all at once she said:—

“My looking-glass is like a pool,  
As still and clear, as blank and cool.

“It fronts the clean white nursery wall,  
With no look on its face at all.

“But when in front of it I go,  
Why, there I am, from top to toe.

“Oh, just suppose I hurried there  
Some day to brush my tousled hair,

“And stood and stared, and could not see  
One single, single sign of me!”

When it was nearly time to leave the February house, Ann remarked that Amos had talked in prose straight along ever since they came.

Amos smiled proudly. “So I have,” he said. He was about to go on to say that he wondered if he would be caught at all, when—whiz! with a scramble and a scuffle a cuckoo rushed out of a

clock just above his head and bobbed intently up and down twelve times. Amos had got only as far as "wonder." "Wonder—wonder—" he stammered, as he heard the clock. "Wonder—wonder—

" Wonder if George Washington  
Did just the way we do?  
Wonder if he slid on ice,  
And now and then broke through;  
Slid on ice, and fought with snow,  
And whittled hickory sticks,  
Called his brother 'April Fool!'  
And played him April tricks?

" Wonder if he shed his shirt  
Down beneath the beeches,  
Kicked his buckled slippers off,  
And his buckled breeches,  
Jumped into the swimming-pool,  
And gave a splendid shout,  
Glad and wiggly, clean and cool,  
Splashing like a trout?

" Wonder did he sit in school,  
And try to work a sum,  
With bumblebees all mumbling,  
'Summer's come, summer's come!'

If he used to count the days,  
And give a sort of sigh,  
Because — how queer! — there could n't be  
A Fourth in his July!

“Wonder if he ever took  
His history and read  
Tales of mighty generals,  
Glorious and dead ;  
Turned the leaves and wished that he  
Could be a hero, too ?  
Wonder if George Washington  
Felt the way we do ?”



MARCH

### III MARCH



*Aries*

*The March house, strangely, was built in a tree,  
With a fluttering roof of leaves,  
And strong, straight boughs for the walls of the house,  
And an apple or two in the eaves.  
A pair of fun-loving twins lived there,  
Who romped on the roof all day,  
And flew great kites when the weather was fair,  
In a most remarkable way.*





*The March house, strangely, was built in a tree*



AMOS and Ann were very curious to know why the twins lived in a tree.

"Well, it saves time," the black-haired twin explained. "There are one or two days in the year when we're bound to be up here anyhow."

The children looked puzzled.

"You see," said the yellow-haired twin, "we never have the slightest idea how March is going to come in. If he comes in like a lion —"

"Then, of course, you want to be out of the way," interrupted Ann, delighted with herself for knowing.

"Exactly," said the twin. "And if he comes in like a lamb, then we know how he's going out, of course. So we simply get up here and stay. Listen to our song."

Then they sang in duet:

"When March comes in roaring, growling,  
Winds swoop over the hilltop howling;  
Bushes toss in the lashing gale,  
Right and left, like a lion's tail;  
Branches shake in the road and lane,  
Tawny and wild, like a lion's mane.  
Fierce and furious, he —

But he 's going out like a lamb ;  
You watch and see !

“When March comes in gentle, easy,  
Waggy and warm and mild and breezy,  
Little buds bob all down the trail,  
Short and white as a lambkin's tail ;  
Hedges and ledges with blooms are full,  
Fluffy and fair as a lambkin's wool.  
Mighty switchy and sweet, and all that —  
But he 's going out like a lion.  
*Hold on to your hat !*”

“There 's not a single solitary clock at this place, anyway,” Amos remarked.

“Don't be too sure,” J. M. told him. “It may be, you see, that the tree keeps a clock in its trunk. First thing you know, the clock may speak up and tell on itself, the way Tom Tuttle used to do.”

“We never heard of Tom Tuttle,” said little Ann.

“Never heard of Tom Tuttle ?” echoed the Journeying Man. “Then you shall hear of him, as soon as —”

From a hole in the tree came the sound of a clock

striking loudly. J. M. was bound to go on, then, just as he had begun, and so he said:—

“As soon as ever spring drew near, and brooks and winds were loose,

Tom Tuttle would be late to school with never an excuse.

“So little and so very late! And when the teacher said That he must take his punishment, he merely hung his head.

“She’d ask him all the hardest things in all the hardest books; And queerly he would answer her, with absent-minded looks.

“‘How many yards make twenty rods?’ And Tommy said,  
‘Oh, dear,  
Twelve rods I’ve cut for fishing poles in our own yard this year.’

“‘How many perches make a mile? Now think before you speak.’  
‘Perches?’ he said, ‘There’s millions in the upper sawmill creek.’

“‘What grows in southern Hindustan?’ Said Tom, ‘I do not know;  
But I can take you to a tree where blackheart cherries grow.’

“‘Name Christopher Columbus’s boats.’ ‘I can’t remember, quite;  
But mine, that lies below the falls, is named the Water Sprite.’

“ ‘Now what is “whistle” — noun or verb?’ ‘I do not know indeed;

But just the other day I made a whistle from a reed.’

“Then all the little listening boys would wiggle in their places,  
And all the little watching girls would have to hide their faces;

“And, ‘Thomas, Thomas!’ teacher’d say, and shake her head  
in doubt,

And make him write a hundred words before the day was out.

“ ‘T was always so when grass turned green and blue was in the  
sky —

Tom Tuttle coming late to school and never telling why.”

They had a good laugh at Tom Tuttle; but presently the thoughts of Amos turned to March hares.

“Do they ever come near enough for you to touch them?” he asked the twins.

“No, March hares are very timid,” the twins said.  
“They are terribly afraid of meeting the March lion at a sudden corner,” the yellow-haired twin added.  
“That is on their minds a great deal.”

“The very best way to get close to a March hare,” said the black-haired boy, “is to take a reserved seat at the annual March-hare ball.”

Then the two brothers told this tale; and Amos  
and Ann saw no reason for not believing it:—

“ Maybe nobody ’s told you  
(For very few people know)  
What happens down in the meadow brown  
At the fall of the first March snow.

“ A flute-note sounds on the midnight,  
Blown by a fairy boy,  
And the rabbits rush from the underbrush,  
All nearly mad with joy.

“ Round and round in the wild wind,  
Faster and faster they prance ;  
The moon comes out and looks about,  
And laughs to see them dance.

“ Cold frost covers their whiskers,  
But never their hind legs tire,  
And whenever a hare feels a flake on his ear,  
He leaps a full inch higher !

“ Harum-scarum and happy,  
They frolic the whole night through ;  
Maybe you’ ll hear them dance, this year  
(Though very few mortals do).”





APRIL

IV  
APRIL



*Taurus*

*The April house was near a pond;  
It was made of reeds and of rushes,  
All helter-skelter and out of kelter,  
And ringed by gooseberry bushes.  
The April Fool on the chimney sat,  
In pointed shoes and a pointed hat,  
And welcomed the three with a tee-hee-hee —  
Fair and funny and fat.*



*The April house was near a pond*



THE owner of the house bowed pleasantly as the visitors approached.

"I'm delighted that you happened to come on the first of April," he said.

"But this isn't the first of April," the children began, astonished.

J. M. pinched their elbows. "Don't contradict him," he whispered. "He really doesn't know any better, you see."

"Have you heard the latest news? [asked the Fool]

Cows, this year, wear button shoes ;

Dogs will dress in pantaloons ;

So will monkeys, minks, and coons ;

Cats go gay in capes and shawls ;

Robins carry parasols ;

Bossy calves and nanny-goats

Skip in scalloped petticoats ;

Molly hares and bunny rabbits

Look their best in jumping-habits ;

Babies are to dress in bearskins

(If they can be made to wear skins) ;

Grown-up folks in straw or leather,

Just whichever suits the weather.



These styles are the latest thing,  
Brought from Paris for the Spring,  
Neat and natty, trim and cool"—

"April Fool!" cried Amos. He felt sure that was coming.

But the Fool merely put his hand to his ear. "Did you call me?" he asked politely.

The children shook with laughter at that, and the April Fool turned to the Journeying Man. "Your turn," he said.

This is the April poem that the Journeying Man recited for the rest:—

"Young Peter Puck and his brothers wrote  
To the wise wood-people a little note.  
It said, 'If you'll meet us by Ripply Pond,  
Wonders we'll show with our magic wand.'  
'What shall we do?' said the forest-folk.  
'Maybe it's merely a practical joke.'  
But they went, good souls, and they only found  
A bare, bare bush and the green, green ground.  
'But watch,' said the fairies, 'and you shall see  
Animals grow on a tiny tree.'

“ The rabbits and squirrels felt aggrieved ;  
They thought that surely they'd been deceived.  
But Peter Puck, at the head of the band,  
Called, ‘ Come, come, Kitty ! ’ and waved his hand.  
Then the buds on the pussy-willow bush  
All became kittens as soft as plush —  
Smooth, round kittens, quite calm and fat ;  
On every twig hung a little cat.  
And the fairies danced, and the glad wood-folk  
Cried, ‘ Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful joke ! ’ ”

“ Now look here,” said the April Fool, when J. M. was done. “ I have several important questions to ask this crowd.”

He then proceeded to ask the questions, not one of which anyone even tried to answer.

“ Now, speech is very curious :  
You never know what minute  
A word will show a brand-new side,  
With brand-new meaning in it.  
This world could hardly turn around,  
If some things acted like they sound.

“ Suppose the April flower-beds,  
Down in the garden spaces,  
Were made with green frog-blanket spreads

And caterpillar-cases ;  
Or oak trees locked their trunks to hide  
The countless rings they keep inside !

“ Suppose from every pitcher-plant  
The milk-weed came a-pouring ;  
That tiger-lilies could be heard  
With dandelions roaring,  
Till all the cat-tails, far and near,  
Began to bristle up in fear !

“ What if the old cow blew her horn  
Some peaceful evening hour,  
And suddenly a blast replied  
From every trumpet-flower,  
While people's ears beat noisy drums  
To ‘ Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes ! ’

“ If barn-yard fowls had honey-combs,  
What should we think, I wonder ?  
If lightning-bugs should swiftly strike,  
Then peal with awful thunder ?  
And would it turn our pink cheeks pale  
To see a comet switch its tail ? ”

The queer little fellow did not seem to be at all disturbed by the failure of the company to answer his questions. He turned courteously to little Ann.



"It's your turn to ask a riddle, you know," he reminded her.

To little Ann's astonishment a riddle popped right into her head — a rhymed riddle, at that!

"Busy Mistress One-Eye  
With her long white train  
Dips her nose and down she goes —  
Up she comes again.

"Not a hand and not a foot;  
Has no need for those;  
Makes her trip without a slip,  
Following her nose.

"Two she has to guide her:  
One, a sturdy chap,  
Other, tall beside her,  
In a silver cap.

"As she moves — how funny!  
Yet it's very plain —  
Brighter grows her one eye  
And shorter grows her train.

"Now, what's the answer?" she cried.

"That's easy," the Fool said promptly. "The answer is, of course, a mushroom."

Amos laughed loudly at that; but kind little Ann was distressed to think what a pitifully poor guess her host had made.

“Oh, not a mushroom, Mr. Fool,” she said. “Don’t you see it has something to do with sewing?”

“Then of course it’s a mushroom,” the Fool said calmly. “Don’t I sow mushrooms every year all over my backyard? Nobody can fool me,” he finished with a chuckle, “about mushrooms.”

And after that naturally there was nothing more to be said.

The children were very reluctant to leave the April house; but J. M. glanced at one of the many topsy-turvy clocks that hung from the ceiling (of all places!), and reminded them that it was high time to be moving on.

MAY

V  
MAY



Gemini

*A green-thatched cottage was May's sweet home  
With velvet moss for a floor,  
And a clambering vine in the gay sunshine,  
And a Maypole set by the door.  
And May herself, with a dimple and curl,  
Dressed in a flouncy gown,  
Was filling baskets — the prettiest girl  
In all of Zodiac Town !*



*And May herself, with a dimple and curl*



THE Journeying Man swept off his green hat when he caught sight of May.

"I knew you'd be here," he said. "May I tell my two young companions how the joyful animals welcomed you when you came?"

May smiled at Amos and Ann. "How did you know?" she asked J. M.

"I saw it all," was the answer. "I was passing through the wood one day—"

The Journeying Man was interrupted here by a clock striking ten, and so he was obliged to dash into rhyme:—

"One day the cheery wood-folk heard  
A robin tell another bird  
A piece of news, a joyful word  
Repeated often over.  
'Oho,' said they, 'we'll plan a way  
To welcome back our pretty May.  
We'll have a celebration day  
To show her how we love her.'

"Professor Bear should speak, they planned,  
With Dr. Fox upon the stand;  
The bird quintette from Mapleville

Would sing its loveliest ;  
And Mr. Owl, the baritone,  
Should give selections of his own ;  
And all the rabbit girls and boys  
Should wear their very best.

“The day was fair with balmy air,  
And banners waving everywhere ;  
The woolliest lamb, all curled and frilled,  
Was sent to meet the guest ;  
And even little rats and things,  
And creatures that had only wings,  
Were given tiny parts to play,  
And waited with the rest.

“Then, tripping light and skipping light  
And laughing clear, a happy sight,  
And flinging flowers left and right,  
Came merry, merry May.  
‘Oh, welcome, welcome home!’ they cried ;  
The banners dipped on every side.  
She curtsied low, ‘Just think,’ she said,  
‘I have a month to stay!’ ”

May looked as pleased as Amos and Ann when  
the rhyme was finished.

“It’s every word true,” she said. “And here’s



some more news that the little bird told — if you'd like to hear it: —

“Miss Butterfly sent word one day to all the garden people  
That she would give a social tea beneath the hollyhock.  
A robin read the message from a slender pine-tree steeple —  
A note that begged them sweetly to be there by six o'clock.  
They came a-wing, they came a-foot, they came from flower  
and thicket;

Miss Hummingbird was present in a coat and bonnet gay,  
And portly Mr. Bumblebee and cheerful Mr. Cricket,  
And tiny Mrs. Ladybug in polka-dot array.  
There were seats for four-and-twenty, and the guest of honor  
there  
Was a gray Granddaddy-long-legs in a little mushroom chair.

“The table was a toadstool with a spider-woven cover;  
The fare was served in rose-leaf plates and bluebell cups  
a-ring —  
Sweet honey from the latest bloom, and last night's dew left  
over,  
And a crumb of mortal cake for which an ant went pilfering.  
A mockingbird within the hedge sang loudly for their revel;  
A lily swayed above them, slow, to keep the moths away;  
So they laughed and buzzed and chattered till the shadows  
lengthened level,  
And Miss Katydid said sadly that she must no longer stay.

Then all arose and shook their wings, and curtsied, every one, 'Good-night, good-bye, Miss Butterfly, we never had such fun.' "

Little Ann looked wistful when she heard all the butterfly tale.

"I do wish I might go to a party like that," she said.

Amos reflected. "I don't know but what I'd be afraid of stepping on the guests," he remarked.

"That's true," Ann agreed. "Just think how it would seem to have Miss Butterfly say to you, 'Oh, you've crushed Mrs. Ant,' or 'Excuse me, but you seem to be sitting on Colonel Grasshopper, Sir.'"

"Tell you what *I* wish," Amos went on. "I wish—Oh, there goes a clock—I wish—I wish—

"I wish, when summer's drawing near about the end of May,  
With bees and birds and other things, that teacher'd teach  
this way :

"Bound Pine Wood north and south and east, and all the way  
around ;  
Tell where the sassafras bushes grow, and where wild flags are  
found ;

“ ‘How far from Huckleberry Hill to Sandy-Bottom Creek?  
How many cherries at a time can a boy hold in his cheek?’

“ ‘Suppose three fish were in a pond, three fishers close at hand,  
Each fisher with a hook and line — how many would they  
land?’

“ ‘What is the shortest cut to where the buttercups are yellow?  
How many fortnights does it take to turn May apples mellow?’

“ ‘Two pickers in a berry patch — when they had picked all day,  
How many quarts, inside and out, would those two take away?’

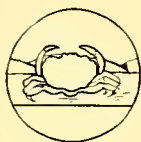
“ ‘If twenty boys turned loose and ran from here in front of  
school,  
How many seconds would they take to reach the swimming-  
pool?’

“ ‘And then I wish the teacher’d say, ‘Well, if you can’t remem-  
ber,  
Go find the answers, *right away*, and tell me in September!’”



JUNE

VI  
JUNE



Cancer

*The June house was n't a house at all,  
But a level and leafy place,  
Where a gypsy scamp had pitched his camp --  
A gypsy merry of face.  
He welcomed J. M. and Amos and Ann,  
And gave them some savory stew,  
Piping hot from a big black pot --  
And all of them ate it, too!*



*The June house was n't a house at all*





IT was so cool and delightful at the June house that at first the travelers didn't have much to say—they simply sat and rested and looked around. But presently Ann began to feel lively again.

"No clocks here, anyway!" she exclaimed.

The gypsy rolled his black eyes. He had a clock, he said, but it ran too fast. "In fact it ran down," he added.

"Where is it?" asked little Ann.

"How can I tell?" returned the gypsy chap. "It ran down, you know—down into the woods. And since it runs so fast, I didn't even try to overtake it."

"But a clock has no feet," cried Amos.

"It has hands, though," retorted the gypsy. "Will you deny that?"

Then he pointed his funny brown finger at Ann. "You can make a rhyme without a clock striking, you know," he said. "Make one, this minute, Miss."

Ann was alarmed. "What shall I make it about?" she said in a flustered voice.

"Anything," the gypsy answered. "Hats will do."

"Hats?" echoed Ann. "However in the world can I make a poem about hats?"

But all at once she did begin to make one; it ran along as smoothly as A B C.

"If hats were made of flowers,  
I think my party bonnet  
Would be a satin tulip  
With a touch of green upon it.

"I'd wear for fun and frolic  
A crinkled daffodil,  
With a crown quite comfortable  
And a flaring yellow frill.

"I'd choose for church a beauty:  
The sweetest flower that grows  
Would be my Sunday bonnet —  
A soft, pink, ruffled rose.

"A daisy crisp and snowy  
Would be the choice for school;  
A fresh hat every morning,  
With scallops starched and cool.

"For picnics and for rambles  
A polished buttercup.  
If hats were made of flowers,  
How people would dress up!"

Just as Ann said the last word of her poem, an inquisitive thousand-leg worm scuttled along the ground about a yard away, and she almost turned a summersault.

“He would n’t think of hurting you,” said the gypsy chap. “Speaking of hats, little Ann—did you ever hear the tale of the centipede lady and her shoes?”

Then he told it.

“Little Miss Centipede  
Went out to shop,  
And at Shoofly & Company’s  
Made her first stop.  
Mr. Shoofly came forward,  
All beaming and gay :  
‘And what can I do for you,  
Madam, to-day?’  
He bowed and he beckoned ;  
He showed her a seat ;  
But the poor clerks turned pale  
When she put out her feet.  
‘How many?’ they faltered.  
‘As many as these,’  
She replied very sweetly,  
‘And hurry up, please.’

“So they hurried and scurried,  
The ten Shoofly clerks,  
All hustling together  
And working like Turks.  
They cleared all the counters ;  
They emptied the shelves ;  
They made, in their haste,  
Perfect slaves of themselves.  
They laced and they buttoned,  
They pushed and they squeezed,  
Miss Centipede watching,  
Quite placid and pleased ;  
They used a short ladder  
To fit her top feet,  
And never drew breath  
Till the job was complete.

“And here’s what they sold her —  
Now count if you choose :  
A pair of cloth gaiters,  
A pair of tan shoes,  
A pair of black pumps,  
And a pair of tan ties,  
Two pairs of galoshes  
And boots, ladies’ size ;  
Five pairs of silk slippers  
For thin evening wear —  
Rose, green, red, and buff.



And a rich purple pair ;  
And soft bedroom slippers  
Of crimson and gray ;  
And a pair of bootees,  
By red tassels made gay ;

“And five sets of sandals,  
Two basket-ball shoes,  
And two pairs for lounging —  
Pale pinks and pale blues ;  
And six pairs for walking,  
And six pairs for snow,  
And six pairs to hunt in —  
Though what, I don't know ;  
And two pairs of goatskin,  
And two pairs of duck,  
And four pairs of kid —  
And on all of them stuck  
The daintiest rubbers.  
Indeed, she looked sweet,  
Miss Centipede did,  
As she tripped down the street !”

By this time they had finished their stew. The Journeying Man rose and picked up his staff. “That was good soup,” he said.

The gypsy looked gratified. “Maybe,” he an-

swered, "it had some of Contrary Mary's truck in it, and maybe it didn't. I'm not saying as to that."

Amos and Ann were filled with curiosity. They wanted to know what "Contrary Mary's truck" might be.

"You tell them," the gypsy said to the Journeying Man. And J. M. did.

"You ask why Mary was called contrary?  
Well, this is why, my dear:  
She planted the most outlandish things  
In her garden every year;  
She was always sowing the queerest seed,  
And when advised to stop,  
Her answer was merely, 'No, indeed —  
Just wait till you see the crop!'

"And here are some of the crops, my child  
(Although not nearly all):  
Bananarcissus and cucumberries,  
And violettuce small;  
Potatomatoes, melonions rare,  
And rhubarberries round,  
With porcupineapples prickly-rough  
On a little bush close to the ground.

“ She gathered the stuff in mid-July  
And sent it away to sell —  
And now you ’ll see how she earned her name,  
And how she earned it well.  
Were the crops hauled off in a farmer’s cart?  
No, not by any means,  
But in little June-buggies and automobeetles  
And dragonflying-machines ! ”





JULY

VII  
JULY



Leo

*The July house was an old, old house,  
With an old, old man inside,  
Who told them stories of other days,  
Stories of pluck and pride.  
His beard was long and his hair was white,  
But his keen eyes were not dim,  
As he told them things that old, old men  
Had long ago told him.*



*The July house was an old, old house,  
With an old, old man inside*



AT first Amos and Ann stood a little in awe of the old man in the July house; but he looked so jolly and friendly, and J. M. seemed to know him so well, that they were soon set at ease.

Little Ann made bold to ask him a question. "Do you remember the American Revolution?" she said.

"My sakes alive, Ann!" cried Amos, a good deal embarrassed.

But the old man did not seem at all offended. "Well," he answered slowly, "I can tell you this much about it:

"The little boys of '76 —

They did their chores and swam and fished,  
And hunted hares and whittled sticks,  
While all the time they wished and wished  
To hear a sudden summons come,  
Each waiting day, each listening night:  
'We need the boys for flag and drum,  
So send them to the fight!'

"The little girls of '76 —

They rocked their dollies to and fro,  
And taught the kittens pretty tricks,  
And heard their mothers talking low;

Then climbed into the hayloft high,  
They peered through every glimmering crack,  
And longed to raise a joyful cry :  
    ‘The men are marching back!’ ”

Amos was inclined to think that maybe Ann’s question hadn’t been such a foolish one, after all.

“Perhaps,” he ventured, “you knew my great-great-great-grandfather. Can you tell me anything about him, sir?”

“I can tell you this,” the old man said :—

“ Your great-great-great-grandfather  
    Was a little chap like you,  
When suddenly one summer  
    Bugles of battle blew,  
And bells rang in the towers,  
    And flags at windows flew.

“ He heard the tramp of horses  
    And the fall of marching feet ;  
He saw a dust on the hill road,  
    Regiments in the street,  
While men were thick in the highway  
    And drums in the market beat.

“ He watched how the townsfolk hurried  
Eagerly to and fro ;  
He heard the voice of his mother,  
Quiet and brave and low ;  
And he saw his father shoulder  
A queer old gun and go.

“ Your great-great-great-grandfather,  
Sturdy and strong like you,  
Glad of the blowing bugles,  
Proud of the flags that flew,  
Was glad and proud as you, lad —  
Son of a soldier, too! ”

“ Why, I *am* the son of a soldier!” Amos cried, delighted. “ Though I don’t know how you found it out, to be sure.”

“ Now, Amos,” the Journeying Man put in, “ it’s only fair that you should give us your poem about a band.”

Amos turned red. “ My poem about a band!” he echoed. “ I don’t know any poem about a band.”

“ One — two — three,” chimed an old grandfather clock on the stairs; and all at once the little boy, much to his astonishment, began to recite. This is what he recited: —

“A band is such a brave, bright thing,  
With tassels tossed, and burnished brass,  
And music quick and fluttering —  
I love to see one pass.

“Sometimes it sounds for turning wheels, —  
A circus coming into town, —  
And then the tune gets in my heels  
And shakes them up and down.

“Sometimes it sounds for marching men,  
With cry of bugles in the street,  
And fair flags blowing free — and then  
I cannot hold my feet.

“I follow, follow on and on ;  
I let it lead me where it will ;  
And when the last clear notes are gone,  
Somehow I hear them still.”

The old man was plainly pleased with the verses ;  
he told Amos that little boys had always felt that way  
about bands, and probably always would.

“Wait a moment,” he said, as the Journeying Man  
made the move to go. “Did the June fellow tell them  
the story of Contrary Mary?”



"Yes, he did," the children answered in duet.  
"And oh, was n't she curious, sure enough?"

"Well, she had a right to be queer," the old man said meditatively. "She inherited queerness. Fact of the matter is, her family name was Queeribus. Let me tell you about *her* great-great-great-grandfather!

"Old Quin Queeribus —  
He loved his garden so,  
He would n't have a rake around,  
A shovel or a hoe.

"For each potato's eyes he bought  
Fine spectacles of gold,  
And mufflers for the corn, to keep  
Its ears from getting cold.

"On every head of lettuce green —  
What do you think of that? —  
And every head of cabbage, too,  
He tied a garden hat.

"Old Quin Queeribus —  
He loved his garden so,  
He could n't eat his growing things,  
He only let them grow!"





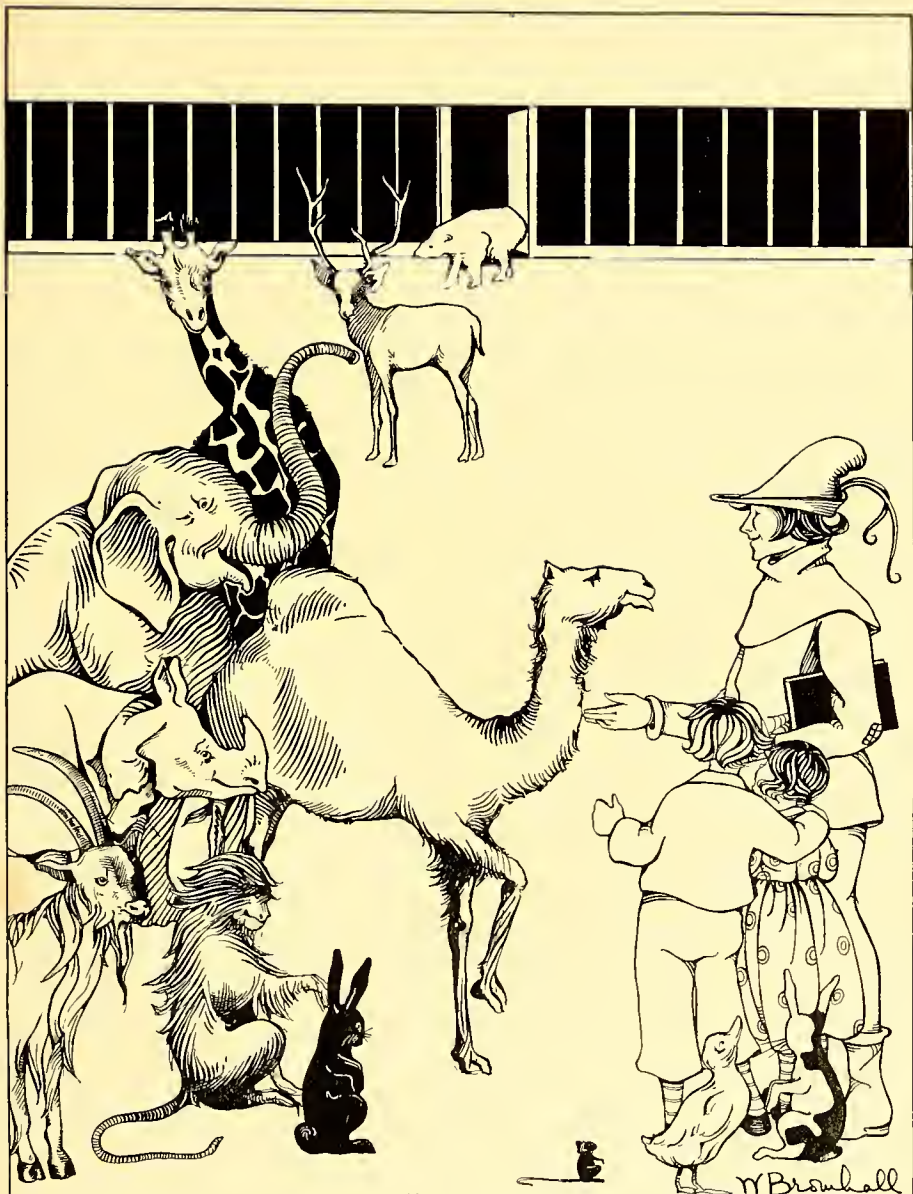
AUGUST

VIII  
AUGUST



*Virgo*

*Oh, such a funny August house —  
It really was like a zoo,  
For animals roamed in all the rooms  
(Even a kangaroo);  
Such sociable, smiling, friendly beasts!  
As soon as the travelers came,  
They hurried out with extended paws,  
Announcing, each, his name.*



*Oh, such a funny August house —  
It really was like a zoo*



WHY, how in the world did they learn to talk?" the young visitors cried. "Did they go to school, J. M.?"

By that time the various animals, having performed their duties as hosts, had scampered off to play again, and so they were out of hearing.

"Did they go to school?" the children repeated.

The Journeying Man shook his head and made answer:—

"The birds and beasts don't go to school;  
I guess 't would make them mad to;  
They would n't pass an hour in class.  
But just suppose they had to!  
How funny it would be to see  
The desks all full of scholars,  
With fins and claws and hoofs and paws,  
Skin coats and brown fur collars!

"How strange 't would seem to happen by  
And hear the teacher saying,  
'The kitty-cat geography  
Must be kept in from playing;  
And once again I tell you plain  
That I shall give a rapping  
To the very next first-reader owl  
That I discover napping.'

“ The crabs would write in copy-books,  
 Such crawly, scrawly letters ;  
 The bees would have a spelling-bee  
 And buzz among their betters ;  
 And monkeys chatter French and squeak  
 In Greek the live-long day,  
 To scare the class of infant lambs,  
 Who only know B-A.



“ They 'd send giraffes up to the board  
 To figure slowly, each,  
 Problems in higher branches  
 That they could never reach.  
 And here and there and everywhere,  
 No matter who played fool,  
 They 'd straightway clap a paper cap  
 Upon the youngest mule.

“ A looker-on might feel, perhaps,  
 A little consternation,  
 To see the bear philosophy  
 Arise for recitation ;  
 And pupils all, and teacher, too,  
 Would pale a bit, perchance,  
 When the elephants came up to do  
 Their calisthenics dance ! ”





"But," Amos persisted, "if they don't go to school, then how on earth did they learn how to talk?"

"I taught them, to be sure," said a hoarse voice overhead.

The children looked up, startled, and were astonished to see that the voice came, apparently, from a long-tailed green parrot, with a hooked beak and round, solemn eyes.

"They come from all parts of the world," the parrot resumed, "for me to teach them. Of course, you need n't call it a school if you don't want to."

He whistled shrilly, and the birds and beasts came scampering back and stood round in a respectful circle. The children tried to talk to them, but they looked bashful and would not say a word.

"Perhaps they'd like to hear some rhymes," J. M. suggested. "Go ahead, Amos and Ann."

"My *stars!*" said Ann, and Amos added: "How in the world can I start off quite suddenly—"

Just then a cuckoo rushed out from a clock somewhere and cuckooed eleven times, and the twelfth time Amos said:—

“ Quite suddenly, a speckled trout  
Down in the swift, clear river  
Began to bustle all about,  
His fishy chin a-quiver.

“ He raised so big a foam and fuss  
The fishes all assembled.  
Why, at a hippopotamus  
He 'd scarcely so have trembled!

“ ‘What ails you?’ asked a brother trout.  
‘What 's wrong?’ inquired a minnow.  
‘Alas! We 're all invited out,’  
He shivered, ‘to a dinner!’

“ They cried, ‘Why, that 's a jolly plan!  
Who asked us out to dine?’  
‘Oh!’ sobbed the trout, ‘a fisherman,  
He just dropped me a line!’ ”

When the poem was finished, the parrot cried,  
“Hear! Hear!” and clapped his wings excitedly, and  
a little raccoon laughed so loud that he had to be sent  
away in disgrace.

“Now, Ann,” said J. M., “give us a poem about  
your cat.”

“Not a wild cat, I hope,” put in the parrot hastily. “That kind of a cat has such bad manners—far, far worse than the raccoon’s—that it is not allowed round here at all. If it’s a polite kind of a cat, go on, Miss; not otherwise.”

Little Ann was very red in the face. “But I can’t go on,” she said. She intended to say also, “There’s nothing to go on with,” but just as she said “There’s,” a little nickel clock called five very clearly, and she remarked, instead:—

“There’s the snow-white cat, the pearl-gray cat,

The brindle and the brown,

The cat with stripes around himself,

The cat striped up and down,

The plaid cat and the buff cat,

The tan, the tortoise-shell,

The bluish sort, the reddish sort —

More tints than I can tell.

But the finest of the whole fine lot

(There’s no disputing that)

Is the jet-black chap with one white spot —

And that’s our kind of cat.

“ The tiny cat is cunning,  
The long, lean cat is fleet,  
The nimble one is made for fun,  
The fluff-ball one is sweet,  
The Persian pussy ’s splendid,  
The Maltese kitty, too,  
But the special kind I have in mind  
Is best of all the crew.  
He ’s not too quick and frisky,  
Nor is he slow and fat ;  
He ’s soft and warm and fits my arm,  
And he ’s our kind of cat ! ”

Ann’s recitation was well received. The parrot said he was very familiar with the kitty kind of cat — in fact, had instructed a good many of them.

Amos remarked that, with so many beasts coming to learn, the place would soon be filled to overflowing.

“ Oh, no,” said the parrot. “ The same train that brings in a crowd takes a crowd away.”

“ *Train ?* ” Amos repeated, his eyes round with curiosity.

“ To be sure — train,” the parrot answered. “ You don’t mean to tell me you never heard of the Wild Beast Limited ? ”

Then he preened his feathers with pride and chanted  
the song of the Wild Beast Limited.

“ The Wild Beast Limited pulls out  
With bustle and with fuss.  
It 's hard to seat the porcupine  
And hippopotamus.

“ The ants demand a special coach  
If one ant-eater goes ;  
The dormouse wants a sleeping car ;  
The chickens shun the crows ;

“ The camel will not stir a peg  
Until his fill he 's drunk ;  
The elephant is loud and cross  
Until he checks his trunk ;

“ The tortoise always comes too late ;  
The hare a day ahead.  
I 'd hate to be the engineer  
Of the Wild Beast Limited.”

Read This  
Book to  
King

SEPTEMBER

IX  
SEPTEMBER



*Libra*

*Very familiar September seemed :  
A flag-pole stood in the yard,  
And the little path that led from the road  
Was trampled bare and hard.  
A bell hung high in the little tower,  
And when the door swung wide  
They saw a young woman with pen in hand,  
Writing away inside.*





*Very familiar September seemed*



THE young woman rose and came smilingly to the door. A clock somewhere inside struck nine, with quick, sharp strokes.

It sounded so familiar, somehow, that the children cried in alarm, "Oh, it's time for school!"



"Not quite, for you scholars," the teacher said. "But folks and things in there" — she nodded toward the schoolroom — "are ready and waiting."

Amos and Ann peered past her through the door, but they could see nothing except desks and seats.

"I suppose Columbus has sailed, by this time," remarked the Journeying Man.

"Oh, yes," the young woman replied. "Furthermore, the Mississippi is flowing into the Gulf of Mexico as hard as it can, and rice is growing in Japan."

The children understood, now, and they were both laughing. "Are the prepositions and adverbs in their places?" they asked.

“Multiplication tables set, I suppose?” said J. M.

“Certainly,” the teacher answered. “And the tables of weights and measures, too. And many things are here in addition.”

“How,” asked little Ann, “do the children in Zodiac Town know when it’s time for school to open?”

“Just the way the children in any other town know,” the teacher replied.

“When bees and birds and butterflies  
Have grown a little lazy;  
When flowers are rare, with here and there  
A late rose or a daisy;  
When streams are slow, and water’s low  
Down in the swimming-pool,  
And grass burns brown along the lane,  
And goldenrod is bright again —  
There’s something tells you just as plain,  
‘Time for school!’

“When apples in the orchard lot  
And pears come thumping, falling;  
When sweet and clear, far off and near,  
The bobwhite’s voice is calling;  
When crickets trill out on the hill,

And dusk comes quick and cool ;  
When all at once, in midst of play,  
You can't remember what's the way  
To multiply — you stop and say,  
‘Time for school!’ ”

A clock boomed ten with a familiar sound, and Ann and Amos jumped.

“I almost thought we were an hour late for school,” Ann said.

“September's a rather funny month,” Amos remarked. “It ends so many things and it begins so many things.”

“I like to come home at the end of summer,” little Ann said. Then, without waiting at all for a clock to strike she swung into a poem:—

“When we travel back in summer to the old house by the sea,  
Where long ago my mother lived, a little girl like me,  
I have the strangest notion that she still is waiting there,  
A small child in a pinafore with ribbon on her hair.  
I hear her in the garden when I go to pick a rose ;  
She follows me along the path on dancing tipsy-toes ;  
I hear her in the hayloft when the hay is slippery-sweet —

A rustle and a scurry and a sound of scampering feet ;  
Yet though I sit as still as still, she never comes to me,  
The funny little laughing girl my mother used to be.

“ Sometimes I nearly catch her as she dodges here and there,  
Her white dress flutters round a tree and flashes up a stair ;  
Sometimes I almost put my hand upon her apron strings —  
Then, just before my fingers close, she ’s gone again like wings.  
A sudden laugh, a scrap of song, a footfall on the lawn,  
And yet, no matter how I run, forever up and gone !  
A fairy or a firefly could hardly flit so fast.  
When we come home in summer, I have given up at last.  
I lay my cheek on mother’s. If there’s only one for me,  
I ’d rather have her, anyway, than the girl she used to be ! ”

“ That’s pretty good,” said Amos critically. “ I like — ”

Before he could go on, a little crystal clock struck four. So Amos had to fall a-rhyming again. He stood on his head and illustrated the last two lines of the rhyme.

“ I like to have vacation,  
I like to camp and roam ;  
But mostly, in a curious way,  
I like the coming home.

“Our old house looks so solid,  
So settled and arranged ;  
The front gate creaks the same old creak,  
The chimneys have n’t changed.

“Those weeks of sea and mountain  
Had many valued points ;  
But oh, this loosening of my bones,  
This limbering of my joints !

“Our old dog comes to meet me  
With something of a smile —  
I wheel right over on my head  
And wave my legs a while.”





OCTOBER

X  
OCTOBER



*Scorpio*

*It was a queer October place —  
No house, you 'd say, at all!  
A wide brown wood with leaves for a floor,  
And timbers straight and tall.  
The little creatures that lived in there —  
Fairies and furry things —  
Scurried away when the children came,  
With bashful scamperings.*



*It was a queer October place*



AS the travelers entered the woods, they heard funny little clicking sounds everywhere.

"It's the sound a watch makes when you shut it," Ann said.

"Maybe they have watches here instead of clocks." remarked Amos.

"Not at all," said a voice behind them. The voice came from a fat Brownie, who was sitting on a stone with his legs dangling. "They have clocks everywhere in Zodiac Town," the Brownie resumed, "even out here in the suburbs. That noise is the Chestnut Chaps unbuckling their belts and throwing off their overcoats."

The children looked as if they did not know whether he was serious or joking.

"It's the honest truth," said the Brownie. "Listen.

"Every little wing of wind,  
Every tilt of breeze,  
Stirs a sound of frolicking  
In the tallest trees:  
Scuffling, shuffling, shouldering,  
Nudges, nips, and taps,  
Watch and wait a moment, child —  
It's the Chestnut Chaps!

“Elbow crowding elbow hard  
In their breeches brown,  
If one comrade takes a leap,  
Ten come bouncing down ;  
When the crackle of a leaf  
Shakes one lad to laughter,  
Till he tumbles from his perch,  
Twenty tumble after.

“Frisky with the silver frost,  
Wild with windy weather,  
Half the autumn-tide they spend  
Giggling all together.  
Rough of coat but sweet of heart,  
Jolly, glad — perhaps  
Never finer fellows lived  
Than the Chestnut Chaps !”

As he finished, there came a series of clicks overhead, and seven Chestnut Chaps landed suddenly at the travelers' very feet. As they fell, two gray squirrels darted out to the end of a limb, their tails jerking with excitement ; but the Brownie waved them back.

“In this wood,” he said, “squirrels are not allowed to feed on chestnuts.” He turned to the squirrels,

who were scowling at him from a high branch. "And you know that very well," he added.

The squirrels merely looked sulky, and so the Brownie addressed himself to Amos. "What," he asked, "is your candid opinion about the wood-folk, anyway?"

"The wood-folk?" Amos said. He had not known that he had any opinion about the wood-folk, but just then a clock struck four, and suddenly he formed an opinion on the spot.

"The wood-folk scamper to and fro ;  
They have no tasks to do.  
It's here and there and high and low  
For them, the whole day through ;  
Up to the tops of highest trees,  
In holes and caves, and where they please.

"They have no clothes to guard with care,  
No shoes upon their feet, —  
For fur and feathers never tear,  
And claws are always neat, —  
No hooks to hook, no strings to tie.  
Small wonder that they skip and fly!

“The wood-folk frolic everywhere,  
With all the sky o’erhead,  
A swaying bough for rocking-chair,  
A hollow trunk for bed.  
And yet, for all this woodland joy,  
Who would not rather be a boy?”

“Well, everyone to his taste,” remarked an odd-looking elf, who appeared suddenly from nowhere in particular. “For my part, I prefer to be just exactly what I am. Once a witch changed me into a boy for ten minutes, and I give you my word I never was so uncomfortable in my life.”

“Are witches *here*?” cried Ann, as she fixed her big eyes on the elf.

“Certainly,” said the elf and the Brownie briskly, in one breath. “Don’t you have witches up your way?”

“Only at Hallowe’en,” Amos told them.

The elf looked thoughtful. “Oh, at Hallowe’en,” he said. Then his eyes began to twinkle, and he spoke as follows:—



“ Suppose this year at Hallowe'en, without a bit of warning,  
The roly-poly pumpkin heads we cut and carved that morn-  
ing

Should grow slim bodies, legs, and feet,

And quick, from post and steeple,

Come skipping 'mongst us, pert and fleet,

Real, frisky pumpkin people!

Suppose that you and I had just completed one that minute,

As day grew late, down by the gate, and set a candle in it,

So that its eyes were deep and wide,

Its mouth a grinning yellow,

Then turn to find him at our side,

A living pumpkin fellow?

Suppose we ran with twinkling heels and met a throng ad-  
vancing,

Their teeth a-row, their eyes aglow, all whirling, pranking,  
prancing;

Suppose they twirled us merrily,

The whole dark landscape lighting —

This Hallowe'en, I think, would be

A little too exciting!”



NOVEMBER

XI  
NOVEMBER



*Sagittarius*

*The next house stood just back from the street,  
In a gray little narrow lane.  
A table loaded with things to eat  
They saw through the window-pane.  
A cozy old lady came out to the door  
And said, "There is turkey in here,  
Potatoes and rice, and cake with spice,  
And no one to dine, oh, dear!*



*The next house stood just back from the street*



AMOS and Ann looked at the Journeying Man.  
“It must be very hard on her, J. M.,” they said.

“What’s hard on her?” returned J. M. “Having turkey and potatoes and all that?”

Amos and Ann turned red. “Having no one to eat them,” they said in a low voice.

It had been some hours since they left the gypsy camp, and they were beginning to be very hungry indeed.

The little old lady stood at the door and waited.

“We might help her out if there’s time,” J. M. said suddenly.

“Oho!” cried Amos. “There’s plenty of that, you know, in Zodiac Town!”

Two minutes later they were seated round the table.

“It’s like Thanksgiving,” Ann said in delight.

“Just think —” J. M. replied —

“Just think, the little Pilgrim boys  
That came ashore, you know,  
From off the good Mayflower ship  
That wild day long ago,

"They had no roasted turkey-breast  
For dinner ; not a scrap  
Of gravy, stuffing, and the rest  
Saw any hungry chap.

"No apple sauce, no pumpkin pies,  
No nuts and raisins plump,  
No oranges and gingersnaps,  
No taffy in a lump.

"I'm glad that things are different now --  
'T would give me quite a shock  
To see our dinner-table look  
As bare as Plymouth Rock.

"And yet, those little Mayflower lads  
Were thankful to be living --  
A splendid reason, after all,  
For anyone's thanksgiving!"

"I think I'm thankfulest of all," Ann said -- and a  
little clock tinkled and sent her into rhyming.

"I think I'm thankfulest of all  
For that old house of ours ;  
The maple by the garden wall,  
The borders full of flowers ;



“The front doorsill that ’s hollowed out  
By many passing feet ;  
The different pictures hung about,  
With faces kind and sweet.

“The firewood’s flame is red and gold  
And makes a spicy smell ;  
There ’s nothing half so clear and cold  
As water from our well ;

“And through the window, sleepy nights,  
Just at the stairway’s head,  
A white star like a candle lights  
Me safely up to bed.

“So brightly all my blessings shine  
That many thanks I give —  
But mostly for that home of mine  
Where I was put to live.”

The old lady was delighted with all this rhyming, and on the spur of the moment she made up a very good rhyme of her own. Amos and Ann thought it was the best of all that they had heard that day — and goodness knows they had heard a great many!

“Suppose you lived in a gingerbread house,  
With a roof of jujube paste,  
And sugar shutters, and peppermint pipes,  
And doors that you could taste ;  
In a land where weather could do no harm,  
Absurd as that may seem,  
With chocolate ground and lemonade rain  
And plenty of snow ice-cream?

“Plenty of snow ice-cream for you,  
And a soda-water pump,  
And a little garden where gumdrops grew,  
And taffy all in a lump.  
Taffy all in a lump, hurrah !  
And tarts and cookies and all.  
If ever you move to a house like that,  
I'll make an early call !”

DECEMBER

XII  
DECEMBER



*Capricornus*

*The house of December was all aglow,  
Each room was jolly and red;  
There were bulgy stockings ranged in a row,  
And holly hung overhead.  
A silver star hung fair and far,  
A silver bell rang clear ;  
And some Christmas children came out and cried,  
"Come in to the Christmas Cheer!"*



*The house of December was all aglow*



THE children had a glorious time at the December house. There was a beautiful tree there, all lighted and ready.

“But we can’t take the things off, you know,” one Christmas child told Amos and Ann, “until somebody says a rhyme.”

A clock chimed two a minute later, and caught Amos in the middle of a sentence, at the words, “it was.” So he went on and said:—

“It was crammed and laden and bent with fruit,  
The tree that bore in a night;  
Rich with treasure from tip to root,  
A very goodly sight.  
Dim in the parlor’s gloom it showed,  
When a tiny gleam at the window glowed;  
When over the hills a rooster crowed,  
It thrilled through all its height.

“A rubber doll on a distant limb  
Stretched with a sleepy word;  
A little lead soldier answered him,  
And a big stuffed elephant stirred.  
A quiver flickered the pop-corn strings,  
Fluttered the tinsel angel’s wings,  
Tinkled the silver balls and things,  
Till all of the company heard.

“A jack-in-the-box with a frisky eye  
Suddenly jumped his lid,  
And a white-rag rabbit that hung close by  
Squeaked with fright when he did ;  
A dog from London began to bark ;  
The animals in the Noah’s ark  
Struggled and scuffled in the dark,  
Back in the branches hid.

“The large French doll (she was very vain)  
Settled her silk and lace ;  
The rocking horse of the tawny mane  
Struck up a gentle pace ;  
And hither and thither the boughs among,  
Sampling the goodies, tooth and tongue,  
A mechanical monkey slid and swung  
With agile monkey grace.

“All was still when the children came  
With candle-stars adorning ;  
Somebody heard and hissed a name,  
Whispered a sudden warning.  
Now don’t get curious, people, please.  
It’s generally known that things like these  
Only happen to Christmas trees  
Quite early Christmas morning.”



“I like that poem, Amos,” said Ann, “though I must say I don’t know how you found out all that.” Then she asked the little Christmas girl to repeat a poem.

“I know one about a different kind of Christmas tree,” the little girl said.

“Not a prettier tree than this one here in the room — surely!” cried Amos and Ann.

The Christmas child reflected. “Yes,” she said, “prettier, in a way, than this — because it was such a surprise. Listen.”

Then she told them about it.

“A little bird told a squirrel,  
And a squirrel told a jay,  
That a poor child lived in a city  
Not very far away,  
Who never at any Christmas  
Had a Christmas tree in her home ;  
And the jay bird told a rabbit next,  
And the rabbit told a gnome.  
The gnome blew thrice on his fingers  
For half a dozen elves,  
And he told them the sorrowful rumor,  
And he said, ‘Now stir yourselves!’

“Then Tip and Twinkle and Tony  
And Pete and Chipper and Chase  
Hurried and scurried the whole day through,  
Till they’d put the tree in place.  
They trimmed it with moss and holly,  
And odd little colored stones,  
And seeds and chestnuts and apples,  
And feathers and leaves and cones.  
And icicles hung upon it,  
And crystals of snow gleamed white;  
And soon as the sun rose on it,  
It sparkled and flamed with light.  
Then two birds perched in the tree top,  
And half a dozen elves  
Climbed gayly into the branches  
And safely hid themselves.

“And the little girl came to the window,  
And wide her shutters flew.  
She cried, ‘I dreamed of a Christmas tree,  
And here is my dream come true!’ ”

Then the presents were taken from the Christmas tree and given round among the little girls and boys who were present.

Just as the last gift was handed down, the last candles went suddenly out, and, at the same time, clocks began to strike all over the house.

The Journeying Man picked up his stick. "Time to go to bed!" he cried.

Amos and Ann were astonished. "To bed?" they repeated, unbelieving. "To bed, in Zodiac Town?"

"No, in your own home," replied J. M. "Come along, Amos and Ann!"

And when they still held back, he gave them a funny little scolding all in rhyme, which pleased them so that they followed him out into the dusk with never a word!



"It's strange how things can differ so!

Now, take two kinds of fruit —

Banana chap and Orange —

And watch each doff his suit.

"Banana's swift and nimble,

His way is safe and slick;

He gets out of his trouser-leg

With a wiggle and a kick.

"But Orange makes a big to-do;

Indeed, it is distressing

To happen by quite suddenly

And see that lad undressing.

"He clings to every single rag

With obstinacy and vim;

It takes ten fingers and a will

To part his clothes from him.

"And when he feels the poor clothes go,

All raggedy and mussy,

He sheds an acid tear or two,

And keeps on being fussy.

"It's strange how things can differ so!

To be quite frank and truthful,

It isn't only things, you know,

But people, chiefly youthful,

“Who show these different traits and tricks  
When bedtime hour comes duly —  
Banana-kind and Orange-kind;  
Now which kind are you, truly?”

“Banana-kind!” cried Amos and Ann, as well as they could for laughter.

“Don’t be *too* quick. Don’t be Grape-kind,” said the Journeying Man.

“Grape-kind?” they echoed.

“And jump out of your skins,” said J. M.

At that Amos and Ann laughed so hard that they had to sit down on the ground. But all at once a clock began to strike fast and furiously. It had struck a hundred before the children could scramble to their feet.

“Oh, how late it is!” they cried. “Take us home, J. M.!”

It surely was late when they started home,  
But they took the trail with a laugh,  
Little Ann clinging to Amos’s coat,  
And Amos to J. M.’s staff.  
And through the meadows and over the hills,  
Happily up and down,

With hurry and scurry and skip and hop,  
And talking in verse the livelong time,  
(For they 'd got in the habit and could n't stop,)   
They traveled the scallopy road of Rhyme,  
The wandering road of much renown  
That leads from Zodiac Town.

They traveled on till they came in sight  
Of a couple of windows shining bright.  
Then J. M. stopped and held up his stick.  
"Yonder 's your house," he said. "Be quick!  
I 'll count very slowly, but you must be  
As far as the gate by twenty-three;  
And when I have counted twenty-four  
You must be inside the door."

"Come with us, do!" the children cried,  
But he only shook his head.  
"I can't, for I am a Journeying Man,  
And I must be off," he said.

Then he started to count — and away at last  
They went on twinkling feet;  
Never did squirrels move more fast,  
Or rabbits run more fleet.  
And just as they touched the latch of the gate,  
They heard, far down in the hush,  
"Twenty-three!" as plain as could be;  
And they scurried through with a rush.

There on the porch, its covers bent,  
The book with the poem lay.  
They picked it up as they fled through the door  
(Just as the voice called, "Twenty-four!").  
"Why, *this* was n't hard!" said they.  
They stared at the poem and hung their heads —  
"Why did we run away?"  
They said to each other, "It seems sometimes  
There really is lots of good in rhymes."

"Perhaps it would be a very good plan  
To study them more," said wise little Ann.

And Amos answered: "I 'm going to know  
Whole pages up and down,  
Then find J. M., in a hurry, and go  
Straight back to Zodiac Town."

They fled upstairs like swift little hares,  
And burrowed into their beds,  
With numberless tunes and rhythms and runes  
A-ringing in their heads.  
And they dreamed all night of a scallopy road  
And of clocks with a curious chime,  
And talked in their sleep — and every word  
Was a rhyme, a rhyme, a rhyme!

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Dear mother  
please take  
good care of  
piggy pig

~~is to~~ it is raining  
And it is hailing  
And it is pouring  
Down  
& now



